



CULTURAL RESOURCES

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CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW



Cultural resources in the Parkway can be categorized into three major groupings: prehistoric activity, gold rush activity, and industrial activity. Extensive prehistoric activity in the Parkway consisted of habitation and utilization of the natural environment by Native Americans prior to the arrival of European settlers.

Archaeological studies have identified a wealth of bedrock mortars, burials, middens, lithic scatter, ceramic scatter, dwelling remains, arrowheads, stone tools, and other isolated artifacts. Previous studies (Section 6.1) are discussed along with the results of the California Historical Resources Inventory System (CHRIS) database search (Section 6.2). Section 6.3 summarizes the sacred lands file searches

followed by a brief description of additional haptoral and cultural resources (Section 6.4). Section 6.5 describes the setting as it relates to the Parkway followed by a discussion on the management of cultural resources (Section 6.5).



Tule hut replica at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG

Gold rush activities in the Parkway were most rigorous between 1847 and 1859. Mine tailing and dredging remains characterize these resources, as well as remnant structures, foundations, walls, and placer mining materials. Industrial activities began in the Parkway in the mid-nineteenth century and related impacts continue to affect the Parkway today. Industrial resources include historic railroads, bridges, utilities, and major structures; as well as other historic period structures and residences that embody a past architectural style.

On September 14th, 2020, Regional Parks and MIG staff met with the Shingle Springs Band (Band) of Miwok to discuss the NRMP. In general, the Band expressed interest in partnering with Regional Parks to implement the NRMP, including being involved through the remainder of the process and the CEQA review. As a result of the meeting, a new Goal Area was established for the Plan to better incorporate cultural resources issues.

Given the sensitive nature of cultural resources data, the exact locations of cultural resources within the Parkway are not included in this report and are instead discussed more broadly. The cultural resources information will be included as a part of the data management system.

6.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are 135 previous archaeological and/or historical reports within, or partially within, the Parkway on record within the North Central Information Center’s California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) database. A Historical Resource Inventory (HRI) report, forming the basis of this summary, examines the findings of 31 previous written reports on record (Dames and Moore 1995). The HRI details the ethnographic and historical background of the Parkway and documents accounts of historic and prehistoric resources. The Dames and Moore HRI study area generally overlaps with the current Parkway boundary, although slight variations are present. The HRI identified 25 previously recorded archaeological sites within the

Parkway. Landowner permission was granted to re-examine and update site records for 22 sites by Dames and Moore in 1995. It also resulted in the identification of 18 new archaeological sites (for a total of 43 known archaeological sites), comprised of 12 historic, four prehistoric, and two multi-component prehistoric/historic properties.

The remaining 103 reports have been filed with the North Central Information Center (NCIC) since the 1995 HRI was published. These remaining reports were taken from State Parks 523 forms, which are the current standard recordation documents for cultural resources in California.

6.2 CHRIS SEARCH RESULTS

On October 4, 2018, an updated California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) search (through NCIC) included all areas within a 0.25-mile buffer around the Parkway boundary with potential to overlap Parkway boundaries and to be affected by Parkway activities. The search results included all known historical and archaeological resources within and adjacent to the Parkway. The CHRIS search identified 62 resources within, or partially within, the Parkway: 19 prehistoric archaeological resources, six combined prehistoric/historic archaeological sites, 18 historic period archaeological resources, and 19

historic structures or buildings. Of note is the Folsom Mining District, listed as a historic archaeological resource comprising multiple sub-sites (i.e., foci) within a large area. The CHRIS search identified 18 archaeological resources fully outside the Parkway, but located within 0.25-mile of the Parkway boundary (eight are prehistoric archaeological resources, three are combined prehistoric/historic archaeological sites, and seven are historic period archaeological resources). A historic landmark resource (Five Mile House) in the study was also included in the CHRIS search from the NCIC.



Acorn granary replica at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG



6.3 SACRED LANDS FILE SEARCH

A Sacred Lands Files (SLF) search was requested on November 5, 2018, through the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC). The search was returned for the entire Parkway on November 19, 2018, with positive results. The NAHC provided contact details for 10 tribal representatives who were recommended as contacts. The United Auburn Indian Community was identified as a tribe with knowledge of tribal resources in the Parkway. Potential future projects in

the Parkway require the lead agency to provide notification to the tribes per AB 52. Additionally, to identify potentially unknown tribal cultural resources, future CEQA projects should include tribal outreach (as recommended by the NAHC) to all tribes possessing information regarding cultural resources within the Parkway. This will occur as a part of environmental review and these future proposed projects.

6.4 ADDITIONAL HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

6.4.1 City of Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources

The City of Sacramento keeps a local register of archaeological resources and historic structures. Currently, no property within the Parkway boundary is listed on the register.

6.4.2 Previously Unidentified Potential Historic Resources

Six previously unrecorded historic resources with potential for eligibility in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) or the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were identified within the Parkway. These sites were identified by systematically comparing current aerial imagery of the Parkway to historical aerial imagery of 45 years of age or older. Sites without prior recordation or evaluation that are 45 years of age or older include:

- Northeast Chlorination Station (N-18), 1000 River Walk Way, Constructed: 1960–1964
- 8164 Capitola Avenue, Constructed: 1962
- American River Ranch, 2140 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova, Constructed: c. 1840
- Camp Pollock, Myrtle Johnston Lodge, 1501 Northgate Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95815, Constructed: 1923
- Jim Jones Pedestrian Bridge, Constructed: 1959
- Sunrise Boulevard Bridge, Constructed: 1955

These properties may be eligible for listing in the CRHR or NRHP based on their age. A historic evaluation of each building would be required prior to a determination of eligibility. The City of Sacramento may determine that one or more properties are eligible for inclusion on their local historic register, despite not meeting the criteria for inclusion on either the NRHP or CRHR registers.



TOP Grinding rock replica at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center.
Photo Credit: MIG

BOTTOM Interpretive grinding rock placard at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG

6.5 SETTING

6.5.1 Ethnographic Setting

The Parkway lies within the ethnographic territory of the indigenous group Nisenan Maidu, one of three Maiduan groups that inhabited the northeastern half of the Sacramento Valley and the adjoining western slopes of the Sierra Nevada (Kroeber 1925; Wilson and Towne 1978). Nisenan sites included villages, seasonal camps, quarries, ceremonial grounds, trading sites, fishing stations, cemeteries, and river crossings (Wilson and Towne 1978). Village sites located within the Sacramento Valley were situated on low rises near streams and rivers, and on gentle south-facing slopes. Important factors for the location of village sites included proximity to water, warmth in the winter, southern or southwestern exposure, and elevation. Permanent settlements were rarely situated above 3,500 feet (Beals 1933; Kroeber 1925).

Tools were fashioned from a variety of raw materials including stone, wood, bone, hide, shell, and plant fibers. Stone types commonly used included basalt, chalcedony, jasper, and steatite. Tools, such as projectile points, knives, scrapers, pestles, pipes, and charms, were made from stone using pressure and percussion techniques, grinding, and pecking. Valley peoples most likely received most of their flaked stone tools already manufactured, since little evidence of shatter or other reduction techniques occur in Valley Nisenan sites (Jerald J. Johnson, personal communication 1992). Wood was used to manufacture items such as bows, arrows, mortars, and digging sticks. Skins were tanned and used to make bags, quivers, and clothing. Plant stems, roots, and fibers were used to produce both



The California Indian Cultural Demonstration Area at the Effie Yeaw Center. Photo Credit: MIG

twined and coiled basketry, mats, nets, ropes, and other items (Wilson and Towne 1978).

Spanish Contact

The Nisenan had limited contact with the Spanish during the early historic period. Fur trappers of the American and Hudson’s Bay companies began expeditions in Nisenan territory in the late 1820s. In 1832, an epidemic, possibly malaria, was introduced into the Sacramento Valley, decimating entire Valley Nisenan villages and forcing many people to retreat into the hills. The Hill Nisenan were greatly affected by the Euroamerican intrusion into the region during the Gold Rush period, ca. after 1848, which resulted in widespread killing and destruction of villages (Wilson and Towne 1978).

6.5.2 Historic Setting

The historic period in interior Central California began relatively late by comparison to much of North America, with little or no Euroamerican activity occurring until early in the nineteenth century. Although occasional Spanish exploratory expeditions toured the California coast as early as the middle sixteenth century, most Spanish activity in the New World concentrated on colonizing and missionizing in Sonora, the Southwest, and Baja California for over 200 years. Little attention was paid to Alta California until the middle eighteenth century (Chapman 1923).



While Spanish Californians never attempted to settle inland, several exploring parties did penetrate the interior. In 1811, a party under the command of Jose Antonio Sanchez proceeded by boat across San Francisco and San Pablo bays to ascend the west branch of the San Joaquin as far as Stockton. Returning to the mouth of the river, they then ascended a short distance up the Sacramento, the first recorded navigation of that river (Chapman 1923).

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Spain found itself engaged in struggles for independence with many of its colonies. While Alta California remained largely loyal, it also was neglected by Spain. As Spanish expeditions to the interior began to slow, American and British expeditions increased in frequency. In 1828, the Americans started fur trapping the lower tributaries of the San Joaquin, working their way north again to the American River (Morgan 1964). By 1837, the American River was given its present name, Rio de los Americanos (A.L. Bancroft & Company 1886). One of the Hudson's Bay Company's expeditions (1832-1833) was infected with malaria, which spread rapidly to the native California inhabitants of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. The death rate reached 75 percent or greater (Cook 1976).

Europeans and Americans soon began to establish more permanent settlements, acquiring land grants from the Mexican governors of California. John Sutter arrived in California in 1839, and he received title to a large grant on the American and Sacramento rivers that he named New Helvetia in 1841. By 1844, Sutter had finished construction of his fort, located in present Sacramento (Owens 1991). In 1844, William Leidesdorff received the 35,521-acre Rancho Rio de los Americanos land grant from the Mexican Government. The grant originally consisted of eight square leagues (about 54 square miles) and extended four leagues (about 12

square miles) from the eastern border of John Sutter's New Helvetia (east of Sacramento) along the south bank of the American River, to the eastern end of present-day Folsom, including the present-day cities of Rancho Cordova and Folsom (United States District Court 1840).

As Sacramento began to attract more settlers, industries began to develop in the surrounding area. Much of this early industry was dependent upon waterpower generated by the American River. The first major effort to harness this power occurred in 1847, when Sutter began construction of a large grist mill on the South Fork of the American River. Discovery of gold at Coloma interrupted this construction (Dillinger 1991) as attempts to keep the discovery silent were unsuccessful (Kyle 1990). Population of the state jumped from 14,000 in 1848, to nearly 100,000 as the gold rush began in late 1849. By the close of 1852, the population had more than doubled to over 220,000 (Paul 1965).

The relative isolation and sparse settlement of the Sacramento Valley ended with the discovery of gold. Sacramento soon became a central trading and market city because of its proximity to mining areas and as the farthest point navigable upstream by ocean-going vessels. Named after the river on which it was located, Sacramento had only four houses in April 1849. By November of the same year, it was a city of almost 10,000 (Hoover et al. 1953). Soon after, the City of Sacramento was incorporated in 1850. The City became a major commercial center and distribution point for northern California, serving as the terminus for the Pony Express and the First Transcontinental Railroad.

Throughout these years of development, gold remained an important focus of activities along the American River. During the earliest years of the Gold Rush, from 1848 until about 1851, gold miners flocked to the placer deposits of



TOP Tule hut replica at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG
BOTTOM Interpretive tule hut placard at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG

the California foothills. After these first flush days, when gold became more difficult to collect, interest shifted to the exploitation of riverbeds, deep gravels, and quartz veins. River mining was a far more complex technique, requiring the use of dams, ditches, and flumes to divert streams from their natural beds. The older, simpler methods of working bars, banks, and gulches were not immediately abandoned, but by the late 1850s, were largely left to Chinese miners. The origin and most important center of early river mining was on several forks of the American River. Many companies went to work along its course, one directly below another. By 1859, the yield from the overworked riverbed had declined and most miners had all but abandoned the American River (Paul 1965).

Sacramento has historically been inundated by periodic flooding, primarily from the American River. The record of flooding dates back to 1805, according to early Native American sources, with later episodes reported by Jedediah Smith in the winter of 1825-1826 and by Sutter in 1846-1847. The first major, well-documented flood in historic times occurred in January 1850, when heavy rains raised the levels of both the American and Sacramento Rivers, flooding the City of Sacramento.

The flood led to the establishment of the Levee Committee and the passage of a bond to fund construction of levees along the American and Sacramento Rivers. Levee construction began at the community of Sutterville, about two miles south of Sutter’s Fort, ran north on the east bank of the Sacramento River to the mouth of the American River and continued east on the south bank of the American River for 2.5 miles. The levee broke in 1852 and 1853. The levee system was widened and strengthened later in 1853 and again in 1854, but was breeched in 1860. In December 1861 and January 1862, Sacramento was subjected to four

major floods. The levees east of the city gave way and both bridges and railroad lines were swept away. Water levels reached five feet in some parts of the city, with sand and silt piled as high as eight feet in some areas.

Following the floods of 1862, the Board of City Levees Commission was created to look at different alternatives for flood protection. One of these, straightening the American River at Rabel’s Tannery at the north end of 28th Street where the levee continually collapsed, was initiated by City Engineers in 1868. The river then flowed into Sutter or China Slough, a few hundred feet from the river’s mouth, and then into the Sacramento River. This slough often overflowed. A minor slough, however, also connected the two rivers north of the point where the river entered Sutter Slough. This slough was deepened and became the new main channel, eliminating the tight curve that caused much of the problem. The former channel through Sutter Slough was blocked off and reclaimed by 1905 (Dillinger 1991). Despite these efforts, flooding continued to remain a threat.

With the emergence of agriculture in the Sacramento Valley after 1868, concern developed for the reclamation of swamp lands that flooded annually. Concerns included flood protection for farms, elimination of debris from hydraulic mining operations, and the development of irrigation systems. Until 1900, most flooded lands were reclaimed piecemeal by individual farmers and communities. Ironically, flooding worsened with the initiation of reclamation projects and the construction of levees. Hydraulic mining upstream sent large quantities of silt and sediment down the river, resulting in sediment-filled riverbeds that decreased their water-holding capacity. During heavy rains, excess water and silt breached the levees and resulted in progressively higher flood levels.



TOP Fire pit replica at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG
BOTTOM Interpretive Nisenan kitchen placard at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG



The first dredging activities began in March 1898, which led to a resurgence of mining along the American River. Gold dredges (essentially large barges) would occupy settling ponds on the river bars; excavate rock, gravel, and sediments in bucket line dredges; process and sift for gold; and send the tailings out the stern. By 1899, the only steam-powered dredge in the district, Pacific No. 1 (manufactured by Risdon Ironworks), and the first of the electric dredges, Ashburton No. 1 (manufactured by Bueyrus Company), were in operation (Aubury 1910). Over time, other electric dredges became the norm, powered by the new Folsom Powerhouse power plant, which had been constructed in 1895 (Bell 2020).

The peak of dredging operations on the American River appears to have occurred during World War I, declining thereafter. Dredging was suspended in 1942 due to the war, but resumed in 1943. In 1962, dredging was terminated. By the time dredging ceased in the American River district, the dredged area extended from the town of Folsom southwest along the south side of the American River to Fair Oaks, south through Natoma to Nimbus, and west to Mather Air Force Base. The dredged area measures approximately 10 miles long and up to seven miles wide. One of the largest dredging fields in the world, approximately one billion cubic yards of gravel were dredged by the Natomas Company (Clark 1980).

Plans for a park along the American River date back to as early as 1915, when the Board of Directors submitted a plan to the City Commissioners of Sacramento for an extensive park system referred to as the “American River Parkway.” This plan was not instituted, but in 1929, the first state park bond act was passed. In 1949, the River Beautification Commission was created to plan and design development of recreational areas on the American River. The State Park



Entrance signage at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. Photo Credit: MIG

Commission had set aside funds for acquisition of lands along the Sacramento and American rivers, available if local organizations could provide matching funds. Taking advantage of this situation, the City of Sacramento became active in park acquisitions. Ten years later, in 1959, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors established a County Department of Parks and Recreation and began planning for development of a park system. By 1962, a master plan that included a Parkway stretching from Nimbus Dam to the Sacramento River was conceptualized. Land purchases were expensive, however, and acquisitions were slow. In 1961, the County Planning Commission approved

plans for a subdivision within 125 feet of the river. This spurred Parkway forces to action, and within a short time, the Save the American River Association (SARA) was established. The activities of this group demonstrated the community support behind preservation of the river and the County began to set aside more funds for land acquisitions. Major land purchases were made between 1961 and 1965, with smaller purchases continuing up to the present. Plans were adopted and revised several times into the 1970s and 1980s. The current Parkway Plan was last updated in 2008.

6.6 MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural Resources are non-replaceable, although some level of damage to built environment structures can be repaired using defined standards (i.e., Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties 2017). Damage or degradation to archaeological resources is permanent and cannot be reversed. Therefore, the preservation of existing resources, and protection of potential resources, is the prime strategy for managing cultural resources.

Knowledge of the current state of cultural resources in the Parkway is essential for effective management, as over time the sites or structures may have degraded since they were last recorded. To that end, it is recommended that the County perform an update to the existing Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) of the Parkway (Dames and Moore 1995). This update would consist of archaeological and architectural surveys by qualified professionals meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Standards, who would analyze resources with potential for inclusion in a historic register. The findings would be summarized in State Parks 523 continuation forms and analyzed for their current eligibility in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR). The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) forms would be included in an updated report that could draw heavily from the existing report in terms of cultural setting and historic background.

A number of cultural resources in the Parkway are threatened by natural processes, such as erosion and human-induced ground-disturbing activities, including tailings from the Gold Rush era dredging, archaeological sites, and other historic resources. Providing information on resources in the Parkway through signage and other educational information is an effective tool to inform and engage the public in the preservation process. Although signage and information cannot protect cultural resources against human and natural processes, they can help preserve cultural history, as well as act as incentives for preservation of cultural resources to current and future generations.

Regional Parks should ensure that all future projects minimize both direct and indirect impacts on cultural resources. Indirect impacts can be as damaging as direct impacts, and less obvious. For example, direct impacts might involve the alteration of a historic building or ground disturbance at an archaeological site. Potential indirect impacts are those that generally happen after the completion of a project or at a location proximal to the project site, such as erosion caused by new structures, or ground disturbance impacting cultural resources downstream. Another example of an indirect impact on cultural resources includes vibration impacts resulting in structural damage to a historic structure from increased traffic or construction noise adjacent to that structure.

In general terms, known archaeological sites should be isolated, fenced off, and disturbed as little as possible. Prior to approval, individual projects in the Parkway should be assessed by a qualified archaeologist to ensure that projects are not situated in or near an area that contains known archaeological resources. If these resources are present, care must be taken to ensure that proper archaeological investigation and mitigation occurs. Further, Regional Parks should maintain partnerships with tribal representatives as official policy for managing the cultural resources of the Parkway.

Historic structures should be kept on a list that is maintained by the Sacramento County Office of Planning and Environmental Review Department to ensure that potential historic structures (such as those older than 50 years) undergo the proper historic evaluation, and that alteration or demolition of these structures is avoided or minimized and fully mitigated.